



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: September 26, 1988

Megan Durham 202-343-4131

FIRST CANADIAN PROJECT UNDER NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN TO BE INAUGURATED

A massive \$1.5-billion U.S.-Canadian project to reverse the decline of North America's once-abundant population of ducks, geese, and other wildlife will be officially inaugurated September 27.

Officials of the U.S. and Canadian governments, states and provinces, and conservation groups of both countries will gather in Saskatchewan for ceremonies opening the Quill Lakes Project. The 7,000-square-mile Quill Lakes region, near Wynyard, Saskatchewan, has traditionally been one of the continent's most productive breeding and staging areas for waterfowl. The 5-year, \$5 million program at Quill Lakes, designed to expand wetlands needed to help restore flocks to previous levels, is the first step in a U.S.-Canadian restoration project that will run through the end of this century.

Drought and the draining of low-lying lands for agriculture and other development contributed to a drop in the continent's fall flight from an average of 100 million ducks in 1970-79 to a projected 66 million this year, second lowest on record.

The project is the first of dozens of undertakings to protect and restore wetlands in the United States and Canada under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, signed by both countries in 1986. Federal participation in the plan, which will continue to the year 2000, is administered in the United States by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and in Canada by Environment Canada.

(over)

"This is an excellent example of international cooperation on behalf of this continent's waterfowl populations and numerous other wildlife species that depend upon wetlands for survival," said Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel. "The various projects to be carried out under the plan are key to ensuring the future of North America's wildlife heritage."

"This is a critical time for waterfowl," said Frank Dunkle, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "The North American Plan is the heart of our efforts to preserve and expand vital wetland areas so important to a diversity of fish and wildlife species."

The North American Plan is widely considered to be one of the most important environmental efforts on the continent in this century. The effort is intended to provide healthy habitat not only for ducks, geese, and swans, but also for other creatures such as fish, turtles, pheasants, and shore birds. That will be accomplished by methods such as providing incentives to farmers to restore wetlands; purchasing critical areas; and improving habitat on existing wildlife refuges, military bases, and other public lands.

Thousands of small lakes and marshes have dried up or been plowed under during the severe drought that has persisted in key duck nesting areas of the United States and Canada during most of this decade, and wildlife has suffered as a consequence.

The Quill Lakes and other projects are being paid for out of initial funds from cooperating private and government organizations. A total of \$1 million is being provided by 12 states: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

Another \$1 million is being matched by Ducks Unlimited, a private conservation organization. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a private group established by Congress, is providing an additional \$2 million, and Canada is supplying a matching \$4 million, for a grand total of \$8 million (U.S. currency) for the Quill Lakes project and other work in Canada. The Federal Government of Canada has earmarked start-up funding of \$1.7 million (Canadian) for North American Plan projects in fiscal year 1988-89. Total cost of the plan is estimated at \$1.5 billion through the year 2000.

The money is being used to buy and lease property that will expand the wetlands where tens of thousands of mallards and other birds are normally hatched each year.

(more)

Quill Lakes is part of the prairie-pothole region of the north-central United States and south-central Canada where the last Ice Age carved depressions, forming millions of ponds. Half the continent's ducks are hatched in this region, and more than 200 other bird species also use prairie potholes. That is why substantial sums of money raised in both countries will be spent in Canada.

Funds also will be spent to improve habitat in every region of the United States under arrangements that will include both outright purchases and arrangements for temporary or long-term use of wetlands. Plans are under way for projects in South Dakota, Texas, Louisiana, California, and New York, and more undertakings elsewhere are expected soon.

Says Harvey K. Nelson, executive director of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan: "It is our best, and perhaps last, chance to preserve vital habitat in both the United States and Canada. It is indeed the conservation challenge of the remainder of the 20th century."

-DOI-

NOTE TO EDITORS: Black-and-white prints of the photo below and 3/4" broadcast-quality video tapes are available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Audio-Visual office: (202) 343-5611. Helicopter tours of Quill Lakes for press will be available through Dawn Redmond, Regina, Saskatchewan, (306) 781-7300 or (306) 781-6088.

Ducks take to the air at Quill Lakes, Saskatchewan, Canada, one of the most important waterfowl nesting areas in North America. Quill Lakes is the first international joint venture under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan designed to restore waterfowl populations hard-hit by the drought and other problems. The project was dedicated September 27. Federal participation in the Plan is being run by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

